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THE MASQUE OF JUDGMENT

THE MASQUE OF JUDGMENT

A Masque-Drama
In Five Acts and a Prelude

By
WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY

Boston
Small, Maynard & Company
M C M

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To E. D. S.

PRELUDE

The action falls immediately before the Incarnation

Persons of the Prelude

RAPHAEL

URIEL

THE ANGEL OF THE PALE HORSE

A SHEPHERD

A SHEPHERD BOY

A YOUNG MAN (*persona muta*)

A GIRL

SCENE I.

A meadow and coppice near the sea; beyond low hills the roofs of a town. Dawn.

Raphael.

Another night like this would change my blood
To human: the soft tumult of the sea
Under the moon, the panting of the stars,
The notes of querulous love from pool and clod,
In earth and air the dreamy under-hum
Of hived hearts swarming,—such another night
Would quite unsphere me from my angelhood!
Thrice have I touched my lute's least human strings
And hushed their throbbing, hearing how they spake
Sheer earthly, they that once so heavenly sang
Above the pure unclouded psalmody.
Sing as thou wilt, then, since thou needs must sing!
For ever song grows dearer as I walk
These evenings of large sunset, these dumb noons
Vastly suspended, these enormous nights
Through which earth heaves her bulk toward the dawn.
With song I shelter me, who else were left

Defenceless amid God's infinitudes,
Bruised by the unshod trample of his hours.

(*He sings.*)

The late moon would not stay,
The stars grow far and few;
Into her house of day
Hung with Sidonian blue
Stealeth the earth, as a mænad girl
Steals to her home when the orgies are o'er
That startled the glens and the sleeping shore,
And up from the passionate deeps of night
Into the shallows and straits of light
Softly the forests whirl.
Laugh, earth! For thy feigning-face is wise;
There is naught so clear as thy morning eyes;
And the sun thy lord is an easy lord!
What should they be to him,—
Thine hours of dance in the woodland dim,
The brandished torch and the shouted word,
The flight, the struggle, the honeyed swoon
Neath the wild, wild lips of the moon?

Beyond the seaward screen of hazel boughs
The waves flash argent 'neath the clambering light;
But wherefore do these wondrous colours run

Out of the place of morning? The young leaves
Are swept and winnowed upward as a flame,
And in their whispering glories swiftly dawns
A shape of lordly wings, each plume distinct
With dyes auroral. Where, 'mid store of light,
Most spiritual silver burns, a face comes through.
My comrade Uriel cometh from the sun!

Uriel (appearing).

Why tarriest on thine errand, Raphael?

Raphael.

I do no errand here.

Uriel.

Why camest thou then?

Raphael.

Since earth is dear to me. Sometimes it seems —
Treading the prairie's autumn sibilance,
Or when the tongues of summer lightning speak
In the corners of the cloud — I could forget
My station 'mid the deathless hierarchies,
And change into a clot of anxious clay.

Uriel.

Mock not, sweet brother! thou who knowest well —
Better than I or Michael or the rest —

The throes that shake these clots of passionate clay;
Knowest their lewd harsh blood, their shell of sense
So frail, so piteously contrived for pain.

Raphael.

I dare to say how little jest it was.
Oft, as I leave these sliding shafts of dark,
And homeward climb the immaterial cliffs,
My heart makes question which were worthier state
For a free soul to choose,— angelic calm,
Angelic vision, ebbless, increscent,
Or earth-life with its reachings and recoils,
Its lewd harsh blood so swift to change and flower
At the least touch of love, its shell of sense
So subtly made to minister them delight,
So frail, so piteously contrived for pain.

Uriel.

Brother, thou dost not well to wander here.
If thou wilt roam, choose some less troubled star.
The roaring midst of the insatiate sun
Where God has set my watch, is peace to this!
Of all the bitter drops that dewed His brow
In his old agony, this earth-drop fell

Most bitter salt, and ever since hath been
Fuller of travailling than other worlds.

Raphael.

Thy speech is dark. I understand it not.

Uriel.

Of a dark thing I speak a few dark words.
Put from thy gaze the sweet bloom of these hills
And all this gorgeous dapple of the sea,
And let thy memory stand again with me
On Time's untrodden threshold, that first day
Which searched and stung our immemorial peace
With pangs of vernal influence. Heaven rose
As if from sleep, and, lo! through all the void
Clambered and curled creation like a vine,
Hanging the dark with clusters of young bloom.
Then from the viewless ever-folded heart
Of the mystic Rose, stole breath and pulse of change,
Delicious pantings such as seize the breast
Of lovers when the love-tide nears its flood,
Yet touched with endless potency of pain,
As lips of mothers when their anguish ebbs
And leaves the waifling life. Then first the Dove

Began to mourn above the mercy-seat,
And the dear sister spirits of the Lamps
Bent all their shimmering wings one way to screen
Their wicks from the wind-flaw. Large with question turned
Angelic eyes to archangelic eyes,
Archangels laid changed lips to the ears of Thrones,
Thrones gazed at Dominations, Powers made sign
To Principalities ; but not one dared,
Voicing the fear that filled him, to cry, "Lord,
What hast Thou brought upon Thy kingdom, Thou
Ancient of Days!" Their silence was right well.

Raphael.

All this the meditative spirits oft
Have pondered. But thy meaning still is dark.

Uriel.

Ourselves who questioned why the world was made
Were born of the same questionable seed,
And we who feared were the first cause of fear.
Of a dark thing I speak a few dark words.
Of old the mind of God, coiled on itself

In contemplation single and eterne,
Felt suddenly a stealing wistfulness
Sully the essence of his old content
With pangs of dim division. Long He strove
Against his bosom's deep necessity,
Then, groping for surcease, put forth the orbs
Of Paradise, with all their imagery,
And the ordered hierarchies where we stand;
Some sharing more in his essential calm,
Some, rebel spirits, banished now or quelled,
The ill-starred sons of his disquietude,—
Disquietude not quenched when fell the pride
Of Lucifer, long bastioned in the North.
Demand of joy, hardly to be gainsaid,
And vast necessity of grief, still worked
Compulsive in his breast: our essence calm,
Those lucid orbs accordant, could not bring
Nepenthe long. His hand He still withheld
Ages of ages, fearing the event,
Till, bathed in brighter urge and wistfulness
He put forth suddenly this vine of Time
And hung the hollow dark with passionate change.

Raphael.

I think for me Heaven seemed not Heaven till then,
When from our seats of peace we could behold

The strife of ripening suns and withering moons,
Marching of ice-floes, and the nameless wars
Of monster races laboring to be man ;
When we could hear the wrestle of hoarse sound
Hurl gust on gust obscurely toward the time
Of disinvolvèd music : till at last,
Standing erect amid the giant fern —

Uriel.

At last ! At last ! O shaken Breast, nowhere
Couldst thou find quiet save in putting forth
This last imagination ? Could no form
Of being stanch thee in thy groping thought
Save this of Man ? Puny and terrible ;
Apt to imagine powers beyond himself
In wind and lightning ; cunning to evoke
From mould and flint-stone the surprising fire,
And carve the heavy hills to spiritual shapes
Of town and temple ; nursing in his veins
More restlessness than called him from the void,
Perfidies, hungers, dreams, idolatries,
Pain, laughter, wonder, anger, sex, and song !

Raphael.

God had one other thought, more sweet, more dire ;
Thy latest words remind thee.

(*Behind the trees a girl's voice sings:* —)

O daughters of Jerusalem!
What said ye unto her
Who took her love by the garment's hem,
Where the tanned grape-gatherers were?
Did any go down and see
If she led him into her house?
Or was it aloft where the wild harts flee,
Was it high in the hills, 'neath the cedar-tree,
That she kissed him and called him spouse?

(*A young man and a girl come over the hill from the town.*)

Uriel. Unto man
Woman was due. To hearts of fire more fire,
To pride of strength a still subduing strength.

(*As they pass through the coppice, the girl sings:* —)

O keepers of the city walls!
Have ye taken her veil away,
Whose hasting feet and low love-calls
Ye heard at the drop of day?
Have ye taken her ankle-rings,
Who is fair, who hath eyes like a dove?
Must she seek her lover, her king of kings,
Naked, stripped of her costly things?
Must she have no garment but love?

SCENE II.

A mountain glade and forest. Midnight.

Shepherd.

Here stand, if thou wilt see, by this great bole.
This way they passed, and hither should return.
But pray thee, gentle god, when they draw near
Abate the splendor of thy face, fold close
Thine eyed and irised plumage. God thou art,
But thou must needs be mighty to escape
The hill girls when they rage! From these old boughs
The climbing moon will soon pour deeper shade
To screen thee more.

Raphael.

How looked they when they passed?

Shepherd Boy.

Coney, how passed the hailstorm o'er, quotha!
Patter! patter! 'twas sung beneath i' the dark.
I lost a birch cup full of whortleberries
Scrambling to cover when I heard their songs.
But when they burst across the glade, I peeped,
And saw their breasts gleam through their angry hair.

Evoë! they had snared the village lad
They hanker for so long. I hear them talk,
Dawdling on well-curbs with their water-skins
Or picking the May-apples.

Shepherd.

'Tis the lad
Who sat mute at the merry threshing-stead,
Turned from their orgies in the sacred wood
With large bright eyes unamorous, and sang
In lonesome places piercing lonesome songs
Of other lives and other gods than theirs —
Perchance of thee and thy bright-wingèd mates,
If mates be thine, for god thou surely art.

Shepherd Boy.

To-night they have him limed! Brow of the hawk,
Throat of the hermit-thrush, and ring-dove eyes!

Shepherd.

He came across the moon-drench dragged by three
Whose bodies shone like the peeled willow wand;
The little snakes they knot into their hair
Lipping his neck, where oozed the red of grapes
From his crushed garland; his hands flung aloft

To the symbol of their fierce licentious god.
His eyes were large and fixed, his lips apart,
As I have seen him in the lonesome woods,
But madder than the maddest bacchant there!

Raphael.

Who cometh yonder?

Shepherd.

Where?

Raphael.

Across the glade.

Shepherd.

I see nought.

Raphael.

There, behind the trailing mist.
The moonlight gathers to a ghostly shape,
Unearthly silver, throbbing like a heart!
It seems a beast and rider.

(*The shepherds make off.*)

Ah, I know
That icy influence, and the voice I know,
First heard in Heaven when time began to be,—
A voice above our voices, and a hush
Beneath our hush, freezing the heart with fear,
With fear the heart even of spirit-kind. . . .

The Angel of the Pale Horse (sings).

The scourge of the wrath of God
We swing and we stay :
(*Rest, my steed, rest !*)
On the green of the hill we have trod,
And the green is grey.
Ours is his scourging rod.

Yea, thy hoofs long to be fleet
On the armied hills ;
(*Yet rest, my steed, rest !*)
Scent of the arrowy sleet
Broadens thy nostrils ;
The mown field smelleth sweet.

God giveth his loins' increase
Into our hand ;
(*Rest, my steed, rest !*)
We shall establish his peace
By sea and by land.
Soon shall their troubling cease !

Raphael.

What makes thine errand here ?

Angel of the Pale Horse.

Still as of old.

Raphael.

I think thou art way-wandered. Here is life.

Angel of the Pale Horse

My horse's feet err not; they are way-wise.

Raphael.

Stand by me in the shade of these old boughs,
And let no anger fan thy wings alight
Or flake the nostrils of thy horse with fire
When the young bacchants halloo down the steep.

Angel of the Pale Horse.

Thou feedest thy giddy and half-human mind
Still on these little spectacles of change,
Forgetting Heaven's great woes!

Raphael.

What woe can come
Into those courts of old beatitude?

Angel of the Pale Horse.

Hast thou not felt its presence there?

Raphael.

Yes — nay —
I know not . . . When I enter Heaven gate,
Fear comes upon me, for I seem to feel

Some subtle waning of accustomed joy,
Some dying off of music — thin, minute,
As the single cricket amid chorusing fields,
Whose ceasing breaks the rapture. Often, too,
Wan faces shun me in the woods of light
And voices of vague dolor die away
Along the living lilies as I come.
But this I held a phantasy of dream,
Bred of too earnest looking on the blight
That falls on mortal things.

Angel of the Pale Horse.

It is no dream ;
Though more mysterious, more dark than dream.
Momently fades the splendor, momently
Silence and dissonance like eating moths
Scatter corruption on the choiring orbs.

Raphael.

No one declares the cause ?

Angel of the Pale Horse.

The cause is here,—
Here in the vagrant courses of the moon,
Who makes her lair and wanders for her love
After her own loose law ; in yonder stars,
Gay spendthrifts of their plenitude of fire ;
In this most dissolute earth, who decks herself

With gorgeous phantasy and delicate whim,
And paces forth before the worlds to dance
A maiden measure, modest lids downcast
To hide her harlot's guile ; but more than these,
And more than all, unutterably more,
Here in the wild and sinful heart of man,—
Of all the fruits upon creation's vine
The thirstiest one to drain the vital breast
Of God, wherein it grows.

Raphael.

Too fiery sweet
Gushes the liquor from the vine He set,
Man the broad leaf and maid the honeyed flower !

(*The shepherds creep back, and stand peering from behind the tree at the angels.*)

Raphael (musing).

What if they rendered up their wills to His?
Hushed and subdued their personality?
Became as members of the living tree?

Angel of the Pale Horse.

A whisper grows, various from tongue to tongue,
That so He will attempt. Those who consent
To render up their clamorous wills to Him,

To merge their fretful being in his peace,
He will accept: the rest He will destroy.

(*The boy whispers to Raphael.*)

Raphael.

What wilt thou, little friend?

Shepherd Boy.

Hither, sweet god! But let the ghostly centaur
stay behind.

Shepherd.

Lean o'er this rock and look into the gorge.
See how their torches dip from ledge to ledge.
They race beside some shape the torrent bears:
The eddies seize it now, and leaning out
Over the pool they stop to howl their hymns,
And, now it plunges, how they madden down
With laughter keen above the drumming foam!

Raphael.

Is't not a man's torn trunk?

Shepherd Boy.

See those behind
Grasping the antlers of the lunging stag,
That bellows when their torches bite his flanks!
I know the witch who rides him!

Raphael.

Come away!
That is a bleeding head she holds aloft
Above the clutching of her comrades' hands!

Shepherd Boy.

No more thou'lt shun their orgies in the wood,
Throat of the hermit-thrush and ring-dove eyes!
Throat of the mourning thrush, thy songs are done;
Sad ring-dove eyes, the lids have shut you in!

Shepherd.

That is his harp the dancers bear before,
Mocking his solemn songs of other gods
And other lives than theirs.

Raphael (musing).

Those who consent
He will accept: the rest he will destroy!

Shepherd Boy.

Look! look! the ghostly centaur goeth down.

ACT I.

Time: as in the Prelude

Persons of the Masque

RAPHAEL

URIEL

MICHAEL

AZAZIEL

THE ANGEL OF THE PALE HORSE

THE ANGEL OF THE WHITE HORSE

THE ANGEL OF THE RED HORSE

SPIRITS OF THE THRONE-LAMPS

THE LION OF THE THRONE

THE EAGLE OF THE THRONE

THE ANGEL OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

SPIRITS OF THE SAVED

SPIRITS OF THE LOST

MOON-SPIRITS

VOICES

ACT I. SCENE I.

A high mountain pass, down which flows a brook, with pools and waterfalls. Early morning.

Raphael (climbing, sings).

On earth all is well, all is well on the sea;
Though the day breaks dull
All is well.
Ere the thunder had ceased to yell
I flew through the wash of the sea
Wing and wing with my brother the gull.
On the crumbling comb of the swell,
With the spindrift slashing to lee,
Poised we;
The petrel thought us asleep
Till sidewise round on stiffened wing,
Keen and taut to take the swing
With the glass-green avalanches in their swerving plunge and sweep,
Down the glassy, down the prone,
Swift as swerving thunder-stone,
We shot the green crevasses
And we hallooed down the passes
Of the deep.

On earth all is well, all is well.
In the weeds of the beach lay the shell

With the sleeper within,
And the pulse of the sleeper showed through
The walls of his delicate house
That will wake with the sun into silver and purple and blue.
Where the creek makes out and the sea makes in
Between the low cliff-brows
Was borne the talk of the aldered linn
Matching the meadow's subtile din;
And hark, from the grey high overhead
The lark's keen joy was shed!
For what though the morning sulky was
And the punctual sun belated,
His nest was snug in the tufted grass,
Soft-lined and stoutly plaited,
And shine sun may or stay away
Nests must be celebrated!

Drowsy with dawn, barely asail,
Buzzes the blue-bottle over the shale,
Scared from the pool by the leaping trout;
And the brood of turtlings clamber out
On the log by their oozy house.
Round the roots of the cresses and stems of the ferns
The muskrat goes by dodges and turns;
Till she has seized her prey she heeds not the whine of her mouse.

Lovingly, spitefully, each
Kind unto kind makes speech;
Marriage and birth and war, passion and hunger
and thirst,
Song and plotting and dream, as it was meant
from the first!

(*He climbs higher, and sings.*)

Peering in the dust I thought
"How all creatures, small and great,
For his pleasure God hath wrought!"

When I saw the robins mate
Low I sang unto my harp,
"Happy, happy, His estate!

"Down curved spaces He may warp
With old planets; long and long,
Where the snail doth tease and carp,

"Asking with its jellied prong,
A whole summer He may bide,
Wondrous tiny lives among,
Curious, unsatisfied."

(*Still climbing.*)

The trees grow stunted in this keener air,
And scarce the hardiest blossoms dare to take
Assurance from the sun. Southward the rocks

Boast mosses and a poor increase of flowers,
But all the northern shelters hold their snow.
Such flowers as come, come not quite flower-like,
But smitten from their gracious habitudes
By some alarm, some vast and voiceless cry
That just has ceased to echo ere I came.
These white buds stand unnaturally white,
Breathing no odors till their terror pass;
Those grey souls toss their arms into the wind,
Peer through their locks with bright distracted eyes
And hug the elfin horror to their breasts—
Poor brain-turned gypsy wildlings, doomed to birth
In this uneasy region! . . . Yonder lift
The outposts of the habitable land.
Ages of looking on the scene beyond
Have worn the granite into shapes of woe
And old disaster.

(*He climbs higher, to where the ravine debouches into the Valley of the Judgment.*)

Each time when I stand
Upon the borders of this monstrous place,
I still must question wherefore it was flung
Thus ruinous with toppled peak and scaur,

Sheer from the morning cliffs that hold up Heaven
To nether caverns where no foot of man
Has clambered down, nor eye of angel dared
To spy upon the sluggish denizens,
If any dwell so deep. What giant plow
Harnessed to behemoth and mastodon
Set this slope furrow down the side of the world?
And to what harvest? . . . Here the sons of men,
Living and dead and yet unborn, might come
Unto the final judgment; here the lost
Might make one desperate stand. . . . What moveth there?
What leonine and wingèd shape is he
Steals up yon gorge all desolate of light
Whence voices of fierce-tongued and desperate streams
Sound faint as throats of nooning doves? Till now
Never have I beheld a living thing
Amid these wastes. What manner beast is he
That he hath power to awe me, though removed
So far the fallen vastness of a cliff
Wherefrom a temple might be quarried, looks
Fit for a shepherd's sling? . . . Surely he comes

From nameless battle yonder in the depths;
But whither steals he homeward there aloft?
What lair is his cloud-hidden in the snows,
Whose mates and loves wait 'neath the desert palms
To hear him tell his deed? Huge was the fight
That left that mighty prowess broken so!
For sorely is he broken: now he stops
And lies exhausted by an icy pool,
Now labors up the shale, skirts the bald top,
Drops with fierce caution down the further slope
Eyeing the next hard pass. I wonder . . . ?
No. . . .

Strange! 'twas a blood-drop fell upon that flower
A-tremble from the brink. Another here
Upon the ground-moss — nay, upon my hand —
It falls all round me! . . . (*Looking upward*)
Ah, an eagle goes
Lame from the battle, mate or duellist
Of him who crept by yonder. Even here
I see the vast wings, shattered and unpenned,
Almost refuse their labor; now he swerves
To rest upon a needled dolomite,
Then upward grievously another stage
Toward some sad eyrie where his heart abides.

I too must seek my eyrie — sad enough,
Since there my heart abides not any more,
Amid the waste infinitudes of light
Missing the flow of day, the refluent dark ;
Amid the bliss of unconcerning eyes
Remembering woman's anguish, man's resolve,
Youth's wistful darling guess, kindled and quenched
And quenched and kindled yet a little year
In eyes too frail to hold their meaning long
Where chance and enmity conspire with death.

(*He flies up the Valley.*)

ACT I. SCENE II.

Above the peaks that crown the head of the Valley of Judgment.

Raphael (flying).

Soon will the cliffs of Heaven give easier way,
For though my heart grows human, yet my frame
With immaterial things accordance keeps,
And to my feet these spiritual hills
Feel native, and the climate kind to breathe;
Still kindlier for the shredded mist of song
That wanders here at morning and at eve
Whispering witless words and prophecy.

Voices (above).

Through the vines of tangled light
In the jungles of the sun
Swept the Hunter in his might
And his lion-beagle dun
Gaped for prey to left and right.

O'er the passes of the moon
Strode the Hunter in his wrath:
The eagle sniffed the icy noon,
"Master, knowest thou the path?
Shall we meet thy foe-man soon?

"On what interstellar plain,
'Mid what comet's blinding haze,
Storm of star dust, meteor rain,
Shall we spy his crouching gaze,
Leap at him, and end thy pain?"

Peace is on the heavenly meres,
Sabbath lies on Paradise;
But the little Throne-lamp fears,
For she sees the Master's eyes,
And she tastes the Master's tears.

Raphael.

Many an age your song has hovered round
This theme of Heaven's distress. What mean ye now?
Was that the lion-hound of which ye sing
Crept wounded hither, masterless, this hour?

Voices (as before).

Where had his gadding spirit led?
Beside what peopled water-head
Stooped he, or on what sleeping face
Was he intent the dream to trace?
Had creature love upon him fawned
Or had he drunk of mortal mirth
That he knew not what a morning dawned

Over his darling earth?
Heard not the storm, heard not the cries,
Heard not the talk of the startled skies
Over the guilty earth?

Raphael.

Those dubious voices fade, and in their stead
Succeeds a sound more anxious and perturbed,
Voices and mutterings of supernal wrath
Or whisperings of fear. . . . Ah, there aloft
Upon the beetling rosy crag they stand,
The pale horse and the white horse and the red!
What rage vermilions his expanded wing?
Why streams his mane so fiery on the wind
Back from his staring eyeballs? What should make
His brother's steady candor pulse and throb
And falter like the light on cavern walls
Rocked under by the tide? O never yet
Did the pale horse seem terrible as now,
Pawing the margent cliff and snorting down
Pale fire into the Valley! . . . Brothers, hail!
I fare from outland. Tell me what befalls.

Angel of the White Horse.

He strays too much abroad. He hath not heard.

Angel of the Pale Horse.

They say that he has lived too much in the sun
And waxes mortal, mortal. We shall see.

Angel of the Red Horse.

Saw'st thou aught stirring in the valley deeps?

Raphael.

Far down below a beast crept wounded hither.
Why gaze ye on each other thus aghast?

Angel of the Red Horse.

Cast ye that way — the passes and defiles!
This way will I.

(*The Angels of the Horses disappear.*)

Raphael.

What news has spread concern
Even to these marks and purlieus of God's dream?

Below the sun's pale rim a paleness moves,
Grows larger, blots the disc with deepening light. . . .
And now above the Valley treads a shape
Too lordly to be aught but Uriel!

Poised on a peak he halts to gaze behind ;
Now wingeth nearer, in the Eagle's track —

Uriel (*approaching*).

Hail, brother.

Raphael.

Hail ! Saw'st thou the fight below ?

Uriel.

Of what I saw I cannot spell the sense,
Too darkly hid for me !

Raphael.

Share me at least
Thy news, though scant. That winged and brindled bulk,
Whence came it and what quarry did it seek ?
And the great eagle, was it mate or foe ?

Uriel.

No earthly beast it was, no earthly bird,
Seeking no earthly quarry. More than this
I know not how to say, ere I have mused
Where in the sun's core light and thought are one.

Raphael.

But yet conjecture clamors at thy heart.

Uriel.

Thou knowest what whispers are abroad in Heaven;
How God pines ever for his broken dream,
Broken by vague division, whence who knows!
And pangs of restless love too strong to quench
Save by the putting of creation forth,—
Quenched then but for a moment, since the worlds
He made to soothe Him only vex Him more,
Being compact of passion, violent,
Exceeding quarrelsome, and in their midst
Man the arch-troubler. Fainter whispers say
He ponders how to win his prodigal
By some extremity to render back
The heritage abused, to merge again
Each individual will into His will:
Till when, his pangs increase.

Raphael.

A nine days' tale.
I hold Him no such weakling! Yet . . . and yet . . .
I have beheld . . . I know not . . . pallor couched
On brows that wont to beacon; through the orbs
Quivers of twilight, hints and flecks of change. . . .

We cannot be, we would not be, I deem,
The same as ere space was, or time began
To trellis there life's wild and various bloom.
— We linger. Let me hear.

Uriel.

Some things He made
Out of his wistfulness, his ecstasy,
And made them lovely fair; yet other some
Out of his loathing, out of his remorse,
Out of chagrin at the antinomy
Cleaving his nature; these are monstrous shapes,
Whereof the most abhorred one dwells below
Within the caves and aged wells of dark
Toward which this Valley plunges. There it waits
Hoarding its ugly strength till time be full.

Raphael.

How nam'st thou him?

Uriel

The spirits meditative
Darkly name him: The Worm that Dieth not,—
Perhaps the scourge reserved for those who prove
Rebellious in the event, perhaps himself
Scourge of the Scourger, biding but his hour

To 'venge his miscreation. So he lies,
A thing most opposite to spirit-kind,
Most hated by the Four who guard the Throne,
Within the viewless panoply of light
Immediately ministrant. To them,
But to the Lion and the Eagle most,
Is given to gaze in the Eternal eyes
Like hounds about a hunter's knee, that watch
Each passion written on their master's brow,
And having read his trouble, steal away
To taste the troubler's flesh beneath their fangs.
So stole away the Lion of the Throne,
The Eagle for his aid. Beneath the moon
Last night I came upon them stealing down,
Too eager on the scent to mark my flight.
Even to the splintered curb of the last profound
I followed, and thence heard the battle rage
Bellowed above by the loath elements,
Till dawn showed in the east, an ashen dawn
Clotted and drizzled o'er with sullen light.

Raphael.

Their hearts were faithful. They were fain to save
The Master from some sad extremity. . . .
But not in yonder depths, alas, doth lie
The arch-foe of his peace. Would it were so!

A monster bred to hatred in the dark.
Would it were so! not rather, as we fear,
Man the uplifted stature, the proud mind,
The laughter!

Uriel.

Speedily our doubt shall end,
For not much more delayeth the event.
—My watch is set within the sun, and thither
My hour constrains me.

Raphael.

Heavenward I. Farewell!

ACT I. SCENE III.

A garden in Heaven. The Eagle sits on the Tree of Knowledge; the Lion and the Angel of the White Horse rest beneath.

Angel of the White Horse.

Deep in the purple umbrage droops the bird,
His sick eye sealed beneath the weary lid
Which scarce his right wing's torn and gaping gold
Disfeathered hideth, since long hours ago
He sidewise tucked his wounded head away,
Shunning the light's offence; and through the boughs
Let sink this mighty pinion sinister
A vast and ruined length, whereof the plumes
That yesterday planed sunlike o'er the Throne
Are all blood-rusted now and misted on
With obscure breathings of a nadir clime.
Between the Lion's paws a thousand flowers
Have withered since he laid him groaning down,
And in uneasy slumber racked with dreams
Flingeth at whiles a sanguine froth abroad
To sear what rests of herbage or of bloom
Unwithered by his breath. They saw me not

Though close I tracked them up the cloudy heights,
Nor once have marked me through the exhausted hours
While here I wait the time to question them.

Hark! in their dreams they speak, and in their dreams
Do act again their awful enterprise.

The Eagle.

Creep softly, softly! Heaven's streets are still,
Each seraph sentry drowseth on his hill,
The winds of song are folded, and as flowers
Folded are all the domes and dreaming towers.
Creep softly, softly; I am with thee, mate!
Softly I soar above the shrouded gate,
And till thou comest past the warding swords
Lone in the outer moonlight I will wait.

The Lion.

Wing swiftly! For the walls of chrysopras
Have melted at my roar to let me pass;
But Heaven is up and peers with mazèd eyes,
And wings are weighed to hinder our emprise.
Wing swiftly, swiftly, down the glooming air,
Past cloud and precipice and mountain stair,

For ere another morning drowns the stars
We must have met the Worm within his lair.

The Eagle.

Drear are the depths, O brother,
Bitter the fight!
Vainly we stand by each other.
Thy might and my might
Are as straw, in the flame and the smother.

Angel of the White Horse.

O ye familiars benedite,
Who, hidden in the eternal glow,
Keep guard about the Throne,
What things were given to your sight
Ere to the hold of such a foe
Ye dared to venture down?

The Lion (awaking).

Ages and ages we gazed,
Stricken at heart and amazed,
Till the morning look
From His brow was strook,
Silver and vair
In the flame of his hair
And his lip with anguish crazed.

Then low I spoke to my mate,

"My heart must unburden its hate.
I will walk through the pathless woods
Where the wild stars hatch their broods,
I will girdle the steppes
Where the meteor creeps
Like a slug on the rimy sward.
Perhaps at the trampled brink
Where the Bear goes down to drink,
Perhaps where on the purple leas
Dance the young Pleiades,
Somewhere at length
I shall laugh in my strength
Spying the Shape abhorred,
Somewhere at last
I shall break my fast
On the flesh of the Foe of the Lord!"

The Eagle.

Wearily thou crept'st back
Sore from the track;
Thy hide was torn and thy tongue was black.
Long thou did'st slumber and deep.

The Lion.

A voice came in my sleep
Saying, "Why wander so far?
Nearhand lieth the earth

Full of rumors of war,
Of passion and pride no dearth.
There in his cavern cold
Lurketh the Dragon old;
He lies and pastures, plain to see,
On God's heart, sluggishly,
As once he sucked of the fruits of gold
Ages ago, on the Eden tree.

Angel of the White Horse.

Hearken! A wind walks in the Tree
Though the lily-heads are still,
From bough to bough inscrutably
It feeleth out its will;
And now the leaves, atremble long,
Utter impulsive song.

The Angel of the Tree.

Not in the loosened whirlwinds that invade
The sun's white core with shade,
Not in the wandering tribes of fire that sweep
With rapine through the deep,
Not in the venom of the caverned Worm
That drowseth out his term,
Nay, not in these or aught akin to these
Consisteth of God's groaning and disease
The incorporeal germ.

Though all that He hath made
Rebels and is exceeding turbulent,
Though all his loins' increase
Go after pleasures other than He meant,
And with excessive claims
Drain and defile the founts of his content,—
Yet only one of all the shapes He brought
Out of the gulfs of thought,
One only creature of his quickening hands
Hath from its brow
With reckless laugh and with reiterate vow
Stripped clean away all decencies and shames;
Till with continual strife
And divagant demands
Of separate life,
The searching and the scornful heart of Man
God's inmost being maims.

The Eagle.

For naught have my wings been broken,
Vain are the wounds of thy paws!
Hark what the Tree hath spoken.

Angel of the Pale Horse.

Hush! For a murmur shakes the bloom
That once drank Eden dew,
A shadowed wind like a word of doom
Darkens the branches through.

The Angel of the Tree.

Now draweth on the time declared of old
When He shall make division of the fold,
Shall winnow out the kernels from the chaff,
Shall tread his grapes, and in a silver cup
Chalice the good wine up
And cast away the pummace and the draff.

Too long and much too long
He hath endured his wrong.
A little vine of life He set to grow
Not far off from the footstool of his feet,
That it might be in spring a pleasant show
Of budding charities,
In autumn clothe itself with temperate sweet
Of love's long-mellowing fruit
So mild the angel youth might pluck and eat
Nor feel the mortal savor trouble shoot
Across their holy ease.
But now the vine,
Grown waste and riotous, has sent its root
With monstrous loop and twine
In circles nine times nine
About the bowels of his holy hill,
And million-fold its mouth
Has drunk his songful springs and quenched his
veins with drouth.

Twelve shapes of sculptured dream
On Heaven's twelve gateways gleam,
Jasper, chalcedony, and jade,
Beryl and lazuline ;
And there-amid the rank leaves of the vine
Earthy and lush
At morn with laughter push,
At evening droop and fade.
Its carnal fruits are insolently laid,
With stealth and hasty birth,
Even in God's streets and in his garden bowers,
And from the topmost glory of his towers
Singeth and maketh mirth
The exultation of its sudden flowers.
Long and too long hath his compassion shrunk
From laying of the axe unto the trunk ;
Nor, though the blade is ground, and kindled white
The furnace, will He quite
Even now,
Even now, though day is late,
Utterly burn and cast into the slough
The thing He made to love and still is loath to hate.
But first He will put off eternity
And put on body of their flowering clay,
That thus brought near He may familiarly

Close in each ear the word of pleading say.
Each blindling heart that stubborns all astray
Shall hear Him calling closer than the blood
That both its ruby gates with tumult fills ;
And to the wild procession of their wills
Raving idolatrous in the sacred wood,
His voice of poignant love
Though quiet as the voice of dust to dust
Shall clearly sound above
The beaten cymbal and the shrewd-blown shell,
Saying as soft as rain,
"The gift I gave I fain would have again,
Ye have not used it well !
Break ye the thyrsus and the phallic sign,
Put off the ivy and the violet,
A dearer standard shall before you shine
And for your lustral foreheads ye shall twine
A fairer garland yet,
When the processions mild
Shall greet you and behold you reconciled
And sing you home across the deathless asphodel.
But ye who will not so,
Take up the phallus and the wreathèd snake,
Let the wine flow,
And let the mountains echo to your yell.
Your ways lie by the burning of the lake
Long kindled for your sake :

Be ye not slow,
But go
Urging your panther teams through the wide
woods of Hell !"

ACT II.

Time: during and immediately after the Crucifixion

ACT II.

The outlying plains of Heaven. Storm and darkness.

Raphael.

But now the air was thick with panic shades
Who made no answer when I cried to them
Across the vortices of spiritual dark.
Upon what stricken plain have I been flung,
Whose miscreations blot with leaves like hands
The far horizon light? Some glow-worm ghost
Flees yonder, pauses, turns, and flees again:
A woman spirit, by the anguish sweet
Wakes in me at her anguish. Sister, hear!

The Spirit of the Throne-Lamp.

O Light undimmed, if thou art powerful,
Speak to the wind! For see, my wings are torn
And shelter not my lamp: 'tis almost spent.

Raphael.

Me too the wind afflicts. Together thus
Our wings will shield the flame. Already, see,
It climbs and steadies in the crystal bowl,
And purges half the terror from thine eyes,

Thou love-lamp of the Lord! Are these his storms?
By his allowance are we thus distraught?

The Spirit of the Lamp.

His throne is empty and Himself is gone.

Raphael.

Child, fright hath crazed thee. Lean thy shaking breast
On mine: shut out the terrifying dark.

The Spirit of the Lamp.

He died with grieving o'er the world He made.

Raphael.

We live in Him; with Him shall all things die.
Bright burns thy lamp; take heart, and tell me soon
What hath befallen in Heaven.

The Angel of the Lamp.

I know not well.
My secret lies upon my heart too long. . . .

Raphael.

Nay, tremble not. Rather look out and see
What presence comes: its influence makes cheer;

'Twill be some spirit glad and resolute.
Put by thy wings and look ; my eyes are blind
Watching the feverous pulsings of thy lamp.

The Angel of the Lamp.

'Tis he whose tent is pitched within the sun,
But hardly glad, no longer resolute.
Even Uriel's lordly light the wind subdues.

Raphael.

Hail, Uriel !

The Angel of the Lamp.

Hail !

Uriel.

Hail, brother ! Sister, hail !

Raphael.

Close, lend thy breadth of wing ! Thou art a strength.
Speak, if thou knowest what has come to pass.

Uriel.

Something I know, and hither through the storms
That vex the deeps and on disastrous shores
Fling all frail stars that coast and merchant there,

I come to learn the sequel — if to learn
Be mine, in such a matter.

Raphael.

Speak.

The Angel of the Lamp.

Oh, speak!

Uriel.

'Neath pleachèd boughs and vines of ancient fire
In the white centre of the sun I lay,
And watched the armies of young seraphim
Naked at play on the candescent plains,
When suddenly the skies of flame were rent
In sunder, and the plain became a sea
Whereon the whirlwind walked through welter-
ing lanes
To the sun's core. With pain I made my way
'Twixt element and angry element.
Vast shapes of gathering and dissolving fire
That seemed as beast and bird, and awful frames
Of shadow, dubious whether bird or beast
Or fish or reptile, hidden until now
In shifting caverns of the photosphere,
Rose up across my path ; and in their eyes
Sat fear, and on their limbs astonishment.

At last, long battling and bewildered oft,
I gained the solar coasts. Wide round I saw
Each planet passion-changed, each haggard star
Reeling from flight and swoon, and the great deep
Toiled like a runner's heart who runs with death.
Calm at confusion's centre stood the Earth,
A spiritual nimbus round her brow
Like as a woman angel-visited,
Sightless and deaf to all things save her swoon
And her heart's solemn hallelujah.

The Spirit of the Lamp.

Oh,
What hath He sent upon the joyous Earth?
The Earth that has the blue and little flowers
Thou brought'st me once to wreath my lamp withal,
Earth-lover! But they faded very soon,
And left a nameless hunger in my heart.
Thy Earth was chosen, Raphael! Art thou glad?

Raphael.

Not glad nor sorry, sister, since not yet
I know the meaning of our brother's words.
Earth-wandering, and the shows of restless time,

Have weighed the eyelids of my spirit down.
Speak, Uriel, and speak plain. What followed then?

Uriel.

That rapt and solemn aspect of the Earth
Soon drew me to her through the shuddering air;
And circling swiftly round her as she went
I neared the twilight verge that dipped toward night.
Here on a sunset hill I stayed my wings.
Rabble of people and much soldiery
Poured thence into their city gates; the place
Was steeped in level splendor after storm,
And like to pillars of advancing fire
Three trees of crucifixion loomed, whereon
Three men hung crucified, one beautiful
Beyond the measure of Man's flowering clay,
Conspicuous o'er the world placed for a sign.
Slowly to meet my gaze the dying lids
Were lifted, and the faint eyes swam on mine —

Raphael.

Nay, sister, sink not! We are three: be strong.

The Angel of the Lamp.

I know whose eyes swam faint on thine! I know
The sorrows that He suffered for his world,

Ere ever He put off eternity
And put on clay, to be by hands of clay
Hung for a sign !

Raphael.

Above the pausing wind
Hearken ! a rush of pinions. Who are these
That put an influence in this bitter air
Like Spring when she comes galliard from the south ?

Uriel.

The globe of amber light wherein they fly
Goes ashen in the flaws. That ship of souls
Tacks in the wind's teeth and is blown abroad
Nigh Heaven's last confines. Now it veers again,
And groweth larger : they will pass this way.

Brother, lift up thy voice and sing to them.
These be the spirits that within the moon
Wander the lucent forests ; shy are they
Amid their wood-thoughts and their shy love-thoughts,
Only by song their minds are quickly swayed.
Wide has the ocean been for their frail wings,
And wild the panic that has driven them forth
From their still lunar isle. Thy song shall be
A kindly net to snare them as they pass.

Raphael (sings).

Shore-birds wet with deep-sea dew,
Fold your wings and stay your flight;
Stay, stay!
Long was the way,
Grieved with wind is your tender light,
Stay, till our love rekindle you.

Wood-birds that through lunar glens
Flood the noon of night with singing,
Hearken, hearken!
Our minds undarken:
O'er your phosphor forests winging,
Say, what shadow scared you thence?

(*The moon-spirits alight in a circle round the three angels.*)

The Spirit of the Lamp.

How fair they must have been ere yet their light
Was ruined with the wind and flying spume,
Being so fair, though ruined!

First Moon-Spirit.

Who are ye
That seem so safe when every shaken world

Voideth its tenantry, and even those stars
That keep the marches and strongholds of space
Flee with affrighted eyes down alien deeps,
Or cling to the necks of comets, whispering words
That stop them in their courses, though they be
Violent souls and outlaw.

Uriel.

We are such
As share God's sorrow in his evil time,
And wait the issue of the desperate draught
He drinks this hour to win surcease of pain.

Second Moon-Spirit.

Speak simply to the simple; make thy words
Accordant to our minds; our element
Is the moon's meek, unintellectual day.

Uriel.

You in the moon have felt His pangs more near
Than may the passionate dwellers in quick worlds
Wrapped in their own hot being; for your sphere
Has cooled the angry metal in its veins,

Its spent volcanoes utter now no more
Their proud and hasty meanings; age by age
Your world tends back to silence, rendering up
Its selfhood and control into his hands
Whence it rebelled, like all his prodigals,
To spend the hoard of fire He dowered them with
Too rashly. So it hangs, a doubtful ground:
Now, brooded on by powers of heavenly peace,
It goeth darkling and your hearts are dumb,
Now, caught within the orbits of desire,
It gathers ghostly splendor; in your woods
Old rites are paid, and o'er your crystal peaks,
That burn at the heart like genie-haunted gems,
Sweeps revelry so wild that mortal men,
Shepherds or sailors, gazing half a night,
Wander at dawn brain-crazed.

Third Moon-Spirit.

Angel, we wait,
We wait with trembling till thy lips declare
This present hour's disaster. Whose the arm
That broke our steppes in twain, and from the roots
Of cloven hills haled shapes of former men
And frames of monstrous ravin, ages dead?

Whose mouth was set against the moon-children,
To blow their sheeny pleasances to dust
And scare them from their world?
What plains are these
Whose spiritual pulse of light and dark
Throbs as if hope and terror struggled there?

Uriel.

These are the plains of heaven, least create
Of God's creation, nearest to his hand
When He would discreate, as now perchance,
The deeps that teem with rebel energies
Wanton, unteachable, intolerable,
Whereof the soul of man, though meant to be
His dearest pride and joy, is frowardest
And first to vex him: were Man's will subdued,
The rest beneath his banners soon would swarm.
Long hath He warned and pleaded, but to-day
With a most searching bosom-whisper pleads;
For in their likeness clad He gives Himself
To die that they may live, accepting Him,
Or, still rejecting, and preferring still
Their own unto his pleasure, may be cast
To outer darkness and the second death.
These storms and perturbations are his throes,
And here we wait until He reassume
His attributes and kingdom.

The Angel of the Lamp.

Will He come?
And will the ancient peace be ours again?
Speak, brother, will it be?

Uriel.

Hope still is ours.
Tremble no more, sweet Flame! Good hope is ours.

The Angel of the Lamp.

My secret lies upon my heart too long!
Since first the trumpet told of Time begun,
And in the seven bowls the seven flames,
So white before and still, a patient praise,
Leaped up in restless colours, fear hath stood
A whispering eighth among the sisters seven,
A thin small voice singing above our songs,
A hush beneath our hush. Each side the throne
The mystic olive trees began to blow,
And on the candlesticks that burn beneath
Dropped dying bloom and fruitage mortal ripe.
When evening spread upon the holy hill
Its excellence of peace, small restless wings,
To Heaven unnative, fluttered round our lamps,
Forever circling nearer till they threw
Into the flame their lives of longing dust,
And though we plucked the char out hastily

A climbing rust had dulled our torch of praise.
Nay, where the very breast of God should be,
Forever panoplied with viewless light,
Gnawed darkness like a worm, and when this
wind
That never came till now, blew wide and thin
The splendor of the Throne-stead — hush, bend
close ! —
His eyes were old with pain. Then all at once —
O brothers, is it hours or æons since ? —
Intolerable lambence lit the air ;
The sea of glass whereon the nations stand
At morn to carol, curdled red as blood,
And rolled a moaning billow to the shore ;
The Eagle screamed ; upon the tabled gem
Where was the footstool of God's feet, lay prone
The Lion's whining muzzle ; and the Calf
Bleated beneath his six-times-folded wing.
My sister lamps were quenched, but ere I fled
I crept up past the Lion's awful paws,
Up past the shrouding light, and saw His place
Was empty. . . . Is it hours or æons since ?
I found the shadowed fields about me, grey
Each hearted amaranth and asphodel,
The living forests with their veins of light
Looped thickly, and the burning flowers between,
The living waters, and the lily souls

Along the waters — all a stricken grey !
Where'er I fled or turned it still pursued —
That Nothingness that sat upon the Throne ;
And now it waits to seize me — yonder, here !

Uriel.

Hush, be of better comfort. Through the plain
Auroral pallors wake the asphodels ;
The wind at last is still ; and eastward far
Beyond the friths and islands of that sea
Which spreads before His dwelling in the Mount,
Behold, beginning glories star the dusk,
As if the clouds rolled burning from the throne,
To show us signs and wonders risen there.
And hark ! the happy presage of keen wings
Ingathering from the corners of the winds ;
Large light, and silvery calls and far replies,
And deeps of song that call unto the deeps.

Raphael.

His agony is done : a little while
He tarries, but He surely comes again
Even though but for a little.

The Spirit of the Lamp.

Let us join
These hasting companies whose steady flight

Goes tempered to all manner instruments
Borne in their midst by hidden taborists,
Lute-players, and them that pluck the dulcimer —
All sweet musicians! Surely these go in
Unto some holy matter.

Raphael.

Surely. Come!

ACT III.

Time: Scene I. before dawn, Scene II. after sunset, of the Day of Judgment

ACT III. SCENE I.

A peak above the Valley of the Judgment. Between midnight and dawn.

Raphael.

Alas, on this lone height my pinions fail,
And half my dreaming world unvisited!
As a sick woman, who, when morning glooms
Must leave for aye the house where she was wed,
Yearns to behold the thrice-familiar rooms,
And rises trembling, and with watch-lamp goes
From chamber unto chamber, stopping now
To muse upon her dead child's pictured brow,
And now to dream of little merriments
Enacted, and of trivial dear events,
Until her weakness grows
Upon her, and she sinks and cannot rise,—
So, since upon the sad and prescient skies
The darkness of this ultimate night was shed,
My feet from haunted place to haunted place
Of my familiar earth have kept their pace:
Alas, that ere the half be mused upon,
And while the coming up of dreadful day

Is still an hour away
My wing is broken, and my strength is gone!

Star after star goes out above the peak,
And only from the morning star is shed
Keen influence. Great star! He is not weak,
His pinions fail not; for he never quaffed
This frail and fiery air that mortals drink:
He has not heard when little children laughed;
He has not watched old pensioners break their bread;
To woman's lips he never held the draught
Of anguish, that a man-child might be born;
The May woods never saw him hiding there
His wings and flaming hair
To watch the young men pluck the budded thorn;
Nor has his mouth put off its seraph scorn
To hang with startled cry
Of grievous inquiry
Above the stoic forehead of the dead.

O heart of man, how I have loved thee!
Hidden in sunlight what sweet hours were mine
Of lover-like espial upon thine;
Thrilled with thy shadowy fears, half-guessing
The hope that lit thy veins like wine,

Musing why this was bane and that thy blessing,
My angel-ichor moved by all that moved thee ;
Though oft the meanings of thy joy and woe
Were hid, were hard to know ;
For deep beneath the clear crystalline waters
That feed the hearts of Heaven's sons and daughters,
The roots of thy life go.
O Dreamer ! O Desirer ! Goer down
Unto untravelled seas in untried ships !
O crusher of the unimagined grape
On unconceivèd lips !
O player upon a lordly instrument
No man or god hath had in mind to invent ;
O cunning how to shape
Effulgent Heaven and scoop out bitter Hell
From the little shine and saltness of a tear ;
Sieger and harrier,
Beyond the moon, of thine own builded town,
Each morning won, each eve impregnable,
Each noon evanished sheer !

Thou fiery essence in a vase of fire !
What quarry gathered and packed down the clay
To make this delicate vessel of desire ?
Who digged it ? In what mortar did he bray ?
Whose wistful hand did lead

All round the lyric brede?
Who tinted it, and burned the dross away?
"He, He," (doth some one say?)
"Whose mallet-arm is lift and knitted hard
To break it into shard!"
Were that the Maker's way?
Who brings to being aught,
Love is his skill untaught,
Love is his ore, his furnace, and his tool;
Who makes, destroyeth not,
But much is dashed in pieces by the fool.

O struggler in the mesh
Of spirit and of flesh
Some subtle hand hath tied to make thee Man,
That now is unto thee a wide domain
To laugh and love and dare in for a span,
And straightway is a prison-house of pain,
A den of loathing, and a violent place,
A hold for unclean wing and cruel face
That mock the searèd heart and darkened brain,—
My bosom yearns above thee at the end,
Thinking of all thy gladness, all thy woe;
Whoever is thy foe,
I am thy friend, thy friend!
As thou hast striven, I strove to comprehend
The piteous sundering set betwixt the zenith

And nadir of thy fates,
Whose life doth serious message send
To moon and stars, anon itself demeaneth
Below the brute estates.
Wild heart, that through the steepening arcs art whirled
To a bright master-world,
And in a trice must blindly backward hark
To the subtérrene dark,
Deem not that mighty gamut-frame was set
For wanton finger-fret!
No empty-hearted gymnast of the strings
Gave the wild treble wings,
Or flung the shuddering bass from hell's last parapet.
Though now the Master sad
With vehemence shall break thee,
Not lightly did He make thee,
That morning when his heart was music-mad:
Lovely importings then his looks and gestures had.

Whatever cometh with to-morrow's light,
Oh, deem not that in idlesse or in spite
The strong knot of thy fate
Was woven so implicate,
Or that a jester put thee in that plight.

Darkly, but oh, for good, for good,
The spirit infinite
Was throned upon the perishable blood ;
To moan and to be abject at the neap,
To ride portentous on the shrieking scud
Of the arousèd flood,
And halcyon hours to preen and prate in the boon
Tropical afternoon.

Not in vain, not in vain,
The spirit hath its sanguine stain,
And from its senses five doth peer
As a fawn from the green windows of a wood ;
Slave of the panic woodland fear,
Boon-fellow in the game of blood and lust
That fills with tragic mirth the woodland year,
Searched with starry agonies
Through the breast and through the reins,
Maddened and led by lone moon-wandering cries.
Dust unto dust complains,
Dust laugheth out to dust,
Sod unto sod moves fellowship,
And the soul utters, as she must,
Her meanings with a loose and carnal lip ;
But deep in her ambiguous eyes
Forever shine and slip
Quenchless expectancies,

And in a far-off day she seems to put her trust.

. . . . . .

O Morning Star! that dost arise
Haughtily now from off thy flaming throne,
And standest in thy wings' outspreaded zone,
With hand uplift and intense vision glad,
More kindling while thy brother planets fade,—
Wilt thou, the seldom-speaker, speak and say
If this, if this be then the far-off day
When God shall give the substance for the shade?
When Man shall wake, and be no more adrad
To lose the precious dream he dreamed he had,
And the long groping of his heart be stayed?

. . . . . .

He answers not; the globèd light he wears
Largens and largens like a wondrous flower,
And in the midst his wavering radiance fades.
Behold, upon the waters, them that be
Above the heavens, how the lily light
Blooms mystical and vast! till all the stars
And all the gathered clouds that wait the day
Are blotted by its rondure. Dimly grows
From height to depth of that magnificence
A splendor sad that taketh feature on. . . .
Lo! where God's body hangs upon the cross,
Drooping from out yon skiey Golgotha
Above the wills and passions of the world!

O doomed, rejected world, awake! awake!
See where He droopeth white and pitiful!
Behold, his drooping brow is pitiful!
Cry unto Him for pity. Climb, oh, haste,
Climb swiftly up yon skiey Golgotha
To where his feet are wounded! Even now
He must have pity on his childish ones;
He knoweth, He remembereth they are dust!

. . . . . .

Earth slumbers; and the freshening winds begin
To blow from out the unuprisen east;
Yet still abides that awful Eidolon
Large on the face of Heaven, and its light
Is as the patience of a thousand moons
Upon the peaks and gorges of the vale.
Now on that giant forehead slowly dawns
Again the star, the bright, the morning star;
Amid the changeful lampings of his orb
The Angel stands, with keen out-spreaded wings,
And lifted hand and intense vision glad,
As when he led his brother orbs in song.
But yet no word nor any breath of song
Begins upon the region silences:
All's hushed as ere the first-created throat
Was vocal.
Now remoter wonders wake,
Impatient glories gather and transpeer

That sky-suspended Image. Three by three
The beryl gates, the gates of chrysoprase,
And those that are a very perfect pearl
Open, and all the citadel of God
Even to the bright acropolis thereof,
The temple of the ark of the covenant,
Lies open, steeped in wroth light from the
Throne;
And all the heavenly folk are busy there.

ACT III. SCENE II.

A peak above the Valley of the Judgment. Twilight.

Michael.

God's vengeance is full wrought, unless this form
That labors from the dark mists of the Vale
Be one whose strength has overlived our wrath,
And the last hunger of whose heart shall be
To creep from out that mass of death, and wait
High on these ruined hills for death to come
At nightfall, when the last strong soul must die.
Nay, 'tis no mortal creature, though he wears
A fallen unhappy splendor, and his wings,
All eyed and irised like the gladdest ones
That glimmer in the pageantry of Heaven,
Are folded sadly o'er his downcast eyes
As now he sits and dreams. 'Tis Raphael.

(*Michael descends.*)

Why sitteth Raphael disconsolate
After the manifest glories of this day?

Raphael.

The rest may keep the glory.

Michael.

Wilt thou share
The love-feast of the saved in Heaven to-night
With hidden traitorous thoughts clouding thy heart?

Raphael.

Never again! Never again for me!
Never again the lily souls that live
Along the margent of the streams, shall grow
More candid at my coming. Never more
God's birds above the bearers of the Ark
Shall make a wood of implicated wings,
Swept by the wind of slow ecstatic song.
Thy youths shall hold their summer cenacles;
I am not of their fellowship, it seems.
God's ancient peace shall feed them, as it feeds
These yet uplifted hills. I would I knew
Where bubbled that insistent spring. To drink
Deep, and forget what I have seen to-day!

Michael.

What thou hast seen? The splendor of his power
Sent forth against the wicked; his right arm
Cleaving unbearable glories, lifted high
To hurl his chivalry down slopes of flame

With wheels and tramplings; the wide threshing-floor
Become a furnace; drop by anguished drop
The oozing of the wine-press of his wrath;
The gross pulp cumbering the floor of the world,
The little priceless liquor chaliced up,
Borne back 'mid plaining silver and sweet throats
For the Spirit's earliest house-gift to the Bride!
Thou would'st forget this gladly, Raphael?

Raphael.

Yes, yes; right gladly.

Michael.

Yonder where the fight
Flung its main sea of blood and broken souls
Into the nether dark, I saw a youth
Cling for a moment to a jutting rock
And gaze back at the angel shapes that rode
The neck of the avalanche; between the wings
Of the pale horse and the red his vision pierced,
Between the ranks of spectral charioteers,
Supernal arms and banners prone for speed,
Up to the central menace of the Hand
That launched that bulk of ruin; and I saw
A light of mighty pleasure fill his eyes
At all that harness and despatch of war

Storming aslope. He laughed defiance back
Ere down cascades of blood and fire was flung
His body indistinguishably damned.
How should this puny valor rise in glee
To greet the power that crushed it, and thy heart,
Angelically dowered, stand listless by?

Raphael.

Perhaps for thinking on another sight.
After thy chivalry passed down and left
The valley-trough cumbered and heaped with death,
A broken girl o'er-lived to find the breast
Her arms had clung to in the awful fall
Strange, alien, not her lover's boyish shape
She deemed she held, but gross with years and sins.
Her changed eyes heavily a moment roamed,
Then settled back on his, the darkened mate
Whom chance had flung her at the hour extreme
In scornful bridals. From his brow she drew
The war-worn locks, and laid her kisses there
Unutterable with life's extreme tenderness.

. . . . . .

Hark! where the last of those redeemed go by,
Companioned of the hasting paranymphs
Who hear afar the Spirit and the Bride

Say "Come," and see the nuptial torch alight
Ere they have put their saffron vesture on,—
Too eager for their goal to join the song
Those throats redeemèd raise, save that their hearts
Throb rhythmic with it, systole dim
And bright diastole, with wax and wane
Of spirit-splendor pulsing to the tune.

Redeemed Spirits (sing, as they fly past below).

In the wilds of life astray,
Held far from our delight,
Following the cloud by day
And the fire by night,
Came we a desert way.
O Lord, with apples feed us,
With flagons stay!
By Thy still waters lead us!

As bird torn from the breast
Of mother-cherishings,
Far from the swaying nest
Dies for the mother wings,
So did the birth-hour wrest
From Thy sweet will and word
Our souls distressed.
Open Thy breast, thou Bird!

Raphael.

Another neareth, chill upon the wind;
Wan fire-flakes stain the clustering spires of cliff,
From ledge to shoulder hapless echo clings
And falters up.

Michael.

The pale one's homing-song!
To-day he makes good harvest, and his voice
Has autumn meanings; jealously and late
His steed foregoes the trampled threshing-stead.

Raphael.

Terrible angel! Never until now
Have I beheld his features through the veil
Of pallor that enwrapped them; now at last
Their terror is distinct, for triumph now
And large appeasement lights them visibly,
As o'er his horse's neck he strains for speed.

Michael.

One flieth with him, rosy-lit within.

Raphael.

Not as the battailous breathing of thy mates
Enrubies them: more vesperine and sad.
'Twill be the lordly light of Uriel, dimmed.
Hail, Uriel! Quench thy speed.

The Angel of the Pale Horse (flying).

Why tarry now?
God's acts are throughly complished: Heaven stays
Till all her sons be gathered.

(*Flies past.*)

Uriel (alighting).

Here I wait
To see the swift reprisals Man shall take.

Michael.

Blaspheme not, lest I hurl thee down to swell
The carrion sin that Raphael mourns above!

Raphael.

Uriel's place is there, by those pale heads,
Those sightless eyes with awful question changed,
Those desperate broken hands cheated in death
With poor embraces chance and alien.
Not Uriel's only,— mine, and thine, and theirs
Thy warrior mates, and chiefly His whose breast
Bathed in some dawn's bright urge and wistfulness
Put out this lovely fruitage, this sweet vine
Of man the leaf and maid the honeyed flower
In mystic alternation, and when noon
Spread clamor in the pulses of the vine,

Was pined and plucked it up! Not so shall one
Deal with another's, much less with his own.

Michael.

For sins not to be borne he cut them off.
Murders, adulteries, and acts unclean,
Idolatries, and broken covenants,
Violent hearts and unconsidering tongues.

Uriel.

The violence and the unclean acts were his;
Unto Himself himself brake covenant;
Before the monstrous fancies of his heart
His heart made heathen mummery and song.
Wherefore to-day himself He punishes.

Michael.

Thy mouth uttereth darkness. Is all dream?
Human and heavenly deed unmeaning both?

Raphael (to Uriel).

Brother, thou art all wisdom, as I know
And still have proved rejoicingly, but now
Thy word indeed is difficult and dark.
Take not away Man's ancient dignity,
The privilege and power to elect his ways,
His kingly self-possession. Level not

The head that lies too low to-day. Snatch not
From brows abased the crown of personal will
Which made them noble, though it brought
them down,
Being worn too carelessly, too like a wreath
Of ivy or poppies meant for holiday.
Man's agonies and ecstasies obscure
Were more than shadow-show! Not all in vain
His groping toward some quaint imagined good,
His blood shed for a scruple, his low days
Winged and illumined with long-suffering love!

Uriel.

Nay, not in vain were these, though otherwise
Bound with the sum of things than unto Man
Seemed likely, wearing that glad wreath he wore,
And going after good the headstrong way.

Raphael.

We wait to hear this riddling talk made plain.

Uriel.

Truth is not soon made plain, nor in a breath
Fluently solved while the chance listener waits,
Nor by the elemental wrestling mind
Wrung from the rock with sobs. Myself have
held,

Where in the sun's core light and thought are one,
Æons of question, and am darkling still.

Raphael.

Speak, brother, though thy words be hard and scant.
The candle flame goes far a moonless night.

Uriel.

The worlds and all their tenantry are Him,
Even to the utmost archipelagoes
Gazed at by maritime angels ere they veer
Homeward, awestruck by omens and sea-signs
Known to no pilot of them, and far-off
Watch the scared islanders beside the straits,—
All these, and whatso lies beyond our hail,
Are effluence of the life that moves in Him,
Thought of his brain, wish of his working blood:
Yet every separate creature of his thought
Hath separate claims and separate potencies.
Oh, not a sparrow falleth to the ground
But He regardeth it! Since ere it fell
A little gladness died away in Him.
And not a creature sinneth but He weeps
His own sin with his creature's — fourfold pain,

Since god and creature, false each to itself,
Was false each to the other. Not a heart
O'ercometh evil and mounts up to good,
But He o'ercometh and is lifted too.
Each life of clay that flowered in fragrant deed,
Each grass-blade that grew willingly, each bird
That through the churlish weather hoarded song,
Not only worked its own salvation out
But helped Him in his old struggle with himself—
Or might have helped — or might have helped, it seems. . . .

Raphael.

Yet did not, thy disconsolate ending says.

Uriel.

Who shall dispute finalities with Him?
Not Uriel. But as far as Uriel sees,
Salvation lies annulled in yonder Vale
And prone are God's true helpers.

Michael.

Clay of clay!
Wassailers, fleshlings, quarrel-mongers, thieves
Of pleasure, plighters of unholy troth,
Mimes, gypsies, idol-breakers, idol-smiths,
Dervishing fantasists — most likely help!

Uriel.

Unlikely : yet the marrow of his bones ;
Heat of the breath of his mouth ; corpuscles red
Energic in his veins, loud gainsayers
Of death's insinuating whisper, "Peace!" . . .
Before the Heavens were spread, or He himself
Rose from his changeless and unpictured dream,
These stirred in Him, demanding to be dowered
With individual shape and destiny,—
Each one a soul, yet each incorporate
With his great soul, which to far happy ends
Should henceforth in a million shapes of will
Immensely groan and travail, not with tears
Alone, but laughter, with singing as with sobs.
Oh, many a golden station on that march
Lie backward of us ! when the armèd worlds
Broke leaguer round some conquered capital,
And in the pleasure-places of its kings
Sat down to feast, the unhelmed gleemen chanting
Victory past and victory to come.
Let me not darken thought with imagery !
Still the naked word escapes me, being too vast,
Too simple, for our little pictured speech.
This chiefly I would say : the restless joy
Which called God from his sleep and bade his hand

Depict much life and language on the dark,
Had other aims and meanings than are writ
In yonder Valley for an epilogue.
Man's violence was earnest of his strength,
His sin a heady overflow, dynamic
Unto all lovely uses, to be curbed
And sweetened, never broken with the rod!

Raphael.

Why did He quench their passion? I have walked
The rings of planets where strange-coloured moons
Hung thick as dew, in ocean orchards feared
The glaucous tremble of the living boughs
Whose fruit hath eyes and purpose; but nowhere
Found any law but this: Passion is power,
And, kindly tempered, saves. All things declare
Struggle hath deeper peace than sleep can bring:
The restlessness that put creation forth
Impure and violent, held holier calm
Than that Nirvana whence it wakened Him.

Uriel.

This day declares He deemeth otherwise.
The Shining Wrestler, tired of strife, hath slain

The dark antagonist whose enmity
Gave Him rejoicing sinews; but of Him
His foe was flesh of flesh and bone of bone;
With suicidal hand He smote him down:
Soon we shall feel His lethal pangs begin.

Raphael.

Fiercer than those that clove thy burning realms
And sent grey winds to waste the plains of Heaven
When on the Cross He sought to purchase peace
And lure his wayward world back to His hand!

Michael.

His lightning dry thy tongue! Why should our minds
Peer and conjecture of the danger past?
Thou knowest what glory followed.

Raphael.

Yes, I know.
The clouds at last rolled burning from the Throne
And let us see the risen wonders there.
Again I hear the gathering psalmody
Chant out the clement tale — eternal God
Made clay, by hands of clay unto the Cross
Hung for a sign, that who beholding Him
Should find Him very God, might dwell with us

In endless light and life. Again I hear
The deep consenting chorus mount and merge
The wayward crests of treble into one;
But still between the calling deeps of song
Vague and unacquiescent hung my heart,
Conning the burden wistfully anew
In hopes to find the joy my comrades found
Hid in the dubious notes. Vague hung my heart,
Wistful as morning boughs that watch the moon,
Not strong as now when I have seen all clear
And o'er the ashes of the world declare—
Listen! Are there not voices in the Vale?

Michael.

They talk together. Some die not till dark.

Raphael.

Aye, until dark! 'Twill be a starless night.

ACT IV.

Time: evening of the Day of Judgment

ACT IV.

A rock in the Valley of the Judgment; about the rock, and filling the whole trough of the valley, lie the bodies of the lost. Twilight.

Raphael.

My lot is cast with these: I watch to-night
Here islanded in death. Say me not nay:
Till from the last lip anguish is unwreathed,
From the last brow the frown of horror fades,
Here I must sit, witness and comforter
If any more conspicuous strengths survive
To mutter or make signal in the dusk.

Michael.

Nay, brother, stay not. Though thy words are calm,
Thy desperate eyes betray thee; thou resolvest
Some sudden irremediable thing.
The past is done, and, whether well or ill,
Necessitously. Put on that robe of song
Woven of youngest light and over-runed
With flickerings of the golden elder speech,
Wherein thou led'st the lily souls along
Choregic o'er the unclouded psalmody
And wert so starry long agone! Arise!

My soul is heavy at thee. Thou art wan;
Thine eyes are dull yet wild, even as these
Who lie involved and heaped along the Vale
Seeming in death to threaten and to rave.
Arise and come away! Why tarry here
To mourn above these outcast, since the fan
Hath winnowed them and left no righteous one?
Rather arise, make glad thy countenance,
And through the courts of day let herald throats
Softly declare thy coming, virgin hands,
From that oraculous tree whose leaves are tongues,
Laurel thee best of Heaven's lutanists
And seat thee at the minstrel-hand of God.

Raphael.

You urge me well. I think my songs to-night
Would cheer their festivals: I have a theme
Of very present gladness, deeply conned.
But if amid the gratulating chant,
If through the dances orbed and interorbed
Furnished with solemn symbol and device,
Perchance there stole a quite unfurnished shape
Nakedly risen from this company?
Holding up horrible accusing hands
Against the nuptial light? That were scarce well.

I fear my lute would glance and jangle off
To themes as good unsung. Hark!

Michael.

'Twas a voice,
Not distant.

Raphael.

Nay, 'tis yonder,—he who lies
Half-lifted from the jetsam of this sea
Across that ragged reef. Another, hush!
A woman's voice, was't not? And see, below—
That aged throat would fain articulate. . . .
They taste sweet speech ere the long silence comes.

A Youth's Voice.

Do any live but me? Do any wake to hear
A word spoke in the dark before I die?

An Old Man.

An old and wakeful spirit rests thee near.

A Young Woman.

Long had I lain asleep, but wakened at thy cry.

Youth.

Not all discourteous is the Conqueror's heart,
Since now of that good strength I wore at noon
Ebbs back a little part.

Old Man.

Enough to syllable thy soul's young scorn,
Though all unripe, unwise;
And haply rouse some one of these that lie
Fixing the dark with undivining eyes
Of human wit and seemliness forlorn,
To speak their separate word or unto thine reply.

Youth.

A song of scorn I minded to have sung,
But all the words are faded from my tongue.
Mysteriously withdrawn,
Out of this desolation I am gone
Aloft into the light of other days.
My heart runs naked in the wind, more fleet
Than are my flying feet,
Above the misty foss and up the mountain lawn
To seek the place of Morning where she stays.
The silver summits held across the dawn
By some gigantic arm, like wrought candelabras,
Kindle their wicks of praise
To light the temple builded not with hands
Above the prostrate lands,
And the religious winds, song-stoled,
Pacing the mighty nave
Fill azure dome and star-held architrave
With hymns unto the gods that grow not old,—

Lords of the joy of life made known
Not unto gods alone,
But perfectly to man and beast and stone,
And by the atomies with rapture shared,
But ne'er by poet's golden mouth
Nor by the west wind singing to the south
Fitly declared.

Oh, for a voice
Here in the doors of death
To speak the praise of life, existence mere,
The simple come and go of natural breath,
And habitation of the body's house with its five
windows clear!
O souls defeated, broken, and undone,
Rejoice with me, rejoice
That we have walked beneath the moon and
sun
Not churlishly, nor slanderous of the bliss;
But rather leaving this
To the many prophets strict and sedulous
Of that sad-spoken god
Who now hath conquered and is surely king,
Have given our lips for life to closely kiss,
Have heard the sweet persuasion of the sod
And been heart-credulous
To trust the signs and whispers of the spring.

L of C.

Second Youth.

Various the reasons why we could not pay
The price exacted from us !
My ear, though fain, I might have turned away
From spring's love-startled promise,
I might have given up the glorious sea
And the majestic mountains might for me
Have ceased to be ;
God, with one sudden rinsing of his hand,
Might have wiped bare
The earth-ball of its deeds and pageantries,
Yea, even of light and air,
That on the stark circumference I might stand
And choose deliberately, unvexed of these,
Between my will and his.
Then I had said, with cheerful voice and strong,
Somewhat dismayed, yet with a cheerful voice,
"This many days, Lord, I have thought it long
Till I could put away creation's noise,
The tragic streets, the poignant drip of rains,
But chiefly the loud speaking in my veins
Concerning this and that desirable.
Now you have put me in a quiet place,
Take but away your too expectant face,
And all shall then be well.

Then I can ponder, as I meant to do
And as I singly long since thought was mine,
The mysteries divine;
Make quiet proof of you
If you be verily my lord or no,
And, having found you to be truly so,
Shall understand for sooth,
That down the eternities I may launch my mind
Not as a tame hawk haggard down the wind,
Whom huntsman's cry pursueth,
But as an eagle without bell or jess,
Obedient alone to his soul's lordliness.

Third Youth.

Better with captives in the slaver's pen
Hear women sob, and sit with cursing men,
Yea, better here among these writhen lips,
Than pluck out from the blood its old companionships.
If God had set me for one hour alone,
Apart from clash of sword
And trumpet-pealèd word,
I think I should have fled unto his throne.
But always ere the dayspring took the sky,
Somewhere the silver trumpets were acry,—
Sweet, high, oh, high and sweet!

What voice could summon so but the soul's
Paraclete?
Whom should such voices call but me, to dare
and die?
O ye asleep here in the eyrie town,
Ye mothers, babes, and maids, and aged men,
The plain is full of foemen! Turn again—
Sleep sound, or waken half
Only to hear our happy bugles laugh
Lovely defiance down,
As through the steep
Grey streets we sweep,
Each horse and man a ribbèd fan to scatter all
that chaff!

How from the lance-shock and the griding
sword
Untwine the still small accents of the Lord?
How hear the Prince of Peace and Lord of
Hosts
Speak from the zenith 'mid his marshalled
ghosts,
"Vengeance is mine, I will repay;
Cease thou and come away!"
Or having seen and harkened, how refrain
From crying, heart and brain,
"So, Lord, Thou sayest it, Thine—

But also mine, ah surely also mine!
Else why and for what good
This strength of arm my father got for me
By perfect chastity,
This glorious anger poured into my blood
Out of my mother's depths of ardency?

A Confused Voice.

Not very long to-day
Thy arm held back the mischief of the tide!
Thou could'st not check the play
Of scythes, the awful chariots beside!
Thy blood has ebbed a little from its pride.

A Girl's Voice.

I waited patiently and thought to hear
The secret reason dark,
The secret reason dark and dear
Why none of us had heart to mark
The pale evangel whispering from the sphere.
For oft the moon between the garden boughs
Her looks of summer longing would efface,
And come to be a halo round the brows
Of Him who died to give the sinner grace,
Now saddening o'er His purchase from that place.
And oft at dawn I heard the Sons of Morning

Silvered with lovely menace fill the sky,
And heard their solemn lips deliver warning
What time the central singer lifted high,
In the deep hush twixt ode and palinode,
The sangrael of the sun, brimmed with redeeming blood.
But how might I attend the minatory
Voices of many angels breathing doom,
When from the window of the little room
My love's face had not faded, and the story
His wakeful mouth had whispered in the gloom
Spake in my pulses yet? And how at evening turn
To feel those sad eyes down the moonlight yearn,
When mouth to mouth and breast to aching breast
I held my lover close, and by his nest
The nightingale, scarce master of his mood,
Now after faint essay
And amorous dim delay
Suddenly steeped his heart in song's mad plenitude?

A Woman's Voice.

What unripe girl is this who maketh bold
To speak for lovers at the extreme hour,
Yet fancy-paints the flower?
Yet hides with image-gilt the naked gold?

O sisters, brothers, help me to arise!
Of God's two-hornèd throne I will lay hold
And let Him see my eyes;
That He may understand what love can be,
And raise his curse, and set his children free.

Another Woman's Voice.

My life was a rank venomed weed
And hers, I think, a flower;
But my harsh voice shall have a power
Fiercer than hers to plead.
About His knees with curses I will cling,
My veins I will break open, till He see
The barb of the intolerable sting,
The tongues of the immitigable fire
He planted there to fret and fumble through me,
To craze and to undo me,
Till on the cruel altars where He threw me
I slew my heart's desire!

Old Man.

Of double fetters be not fain, my child,
To these thou wearest be thou reconciled.
Spread not before his dark averted gaze
(Now that He holds his hand and seemeth satisfied)
The love that called you unappointed ways

And filled your hearts with pride.
A little while He left you free
In passion's privilege
To god it on the peaks of personality,
But ye have walked too near the hither edge.

Yet once I thought—
My old heart meekened to an evening mood
By dint of years and much beatitude—
He was not jealous as the prophet taught,
Nor loving-tolerant as mild teachers held,
But swayed to mystical participation
Of various delight
By every chrysalid's meandering flight
And million-footed onset of heroic nation;
To instant joy impelled
By every jet of life that from Time's fountain
quelled.
So deemed I, musing on the headstrong glee
Of children at my knee,
But He ordained his ways after another fashion.

Fourth Youth.

'Twas not the lover nor the warrior stirred
His jealous arm to smite,
Nor he who longed to launch forth as a bird
In far and lonely flight

To seek the truth of things, nor he who heard
The choral winds in Nature's temple chaunting.
All these He could endure,
Since his creation and its furniture
They merely used, nor vexed his ears with vaunting
Themselves creators too
And fashioners of worlds, and pilots of them flaunting
Beside his in the blue.
But some there were infatuate, audacious,
To whom the world's vast girth
Seemed niggard and unspacious;
Who, having clambered or been borne on wings
Above the realms of sense
From off God's secret altars ravished thence
The plastic fire of his imaginings
And brought it down to earth.

Then, pale with supernatural intention,
We builders of the over-world arose,
And softly to their houses of ascension,
Orbing as soft as April buds unclose,
But bowelled of the furious lava-stream,
Star after ordered star went up the heavens of dream:
Each from the other ever differing,

Glory from glory,
And each a world summed and replete
With all the human heart forebodeth well
Or hoardeth to repeat
Of tragical and sweet
In earthly summer and the mortal spring
And man's peculiar story,
Yet by the mind made an immortal thing,
Patiently purged and weaned of its corruptible.

Oh, how should Man into the dust be trod,
Who is himself a god?
How should the lord of each enchanted isle
For gazing on a brother-god's high sacrificial sorrow
Say himself low and vile,
Or for that Sufferer's sake
Teen to his own undarkened being borrow,
And in a gloom of abnegation break
The wand wherewith he summoned from their sleep
The whirlwinds of the everlasting deep,
And souls of men and spirits of lost hours
And spring's sequestered firstlings, the sky flowers,
Bound to his golden powers?

Michael.

I wait no longer on their stammering tongues!
Once more I pray thee rise and come away.
The Valley darkens fast, and Heaven stays
Thy single voice to make its concord full.

Raphael.

These voices we have hearkened lack as well,
To make such concord as I care to hear.

Michael.

Then curse thee for a stubborn heart! — Nay, nay,
I will not curse thee whom I love. . . . Take heed
Lest any wing patrolling in the dark,
Mistaking thee for one of these, should smite.

Raphael.

Already from the deeps approacheth one,
Staining the limbs and faces of the dead
With amber as he flies. What clime has blown
Azaziel's radiance to so blear a tinct?

Azaziel (flying past).

Woe! Woe! unto the dwellers in this Vale.
Woe unto them who wait the second death!
Prepare to meet the Worm that dieth not!

Raphael.

Azaziel, hear! What meaneth . . . ?

Michael.

He is past,
Bearing his message further. How it sobs
And falters on the wind!

Raphael.

In the deeps begins
A myriad lamentation. . . .

Michael.

Nearer now,
And mixed with keener individual cry. . . .

Raphael.

The sea of death sways moaning and recoils,
Bristling with serried surf of forms uplift,
Postures of supplication and despair,
Forlorn attitudes!

Michael.

From the starless sky
A star shoots screaming, hushes in mid-flight,
And stands at gaze above the vasty caves,
The cañons and the aged wells of dark
Toward which this valley plunges.

Raphael.

Far below
Disastrous splendor glares above the abyss,
And in the midst a bulk of sinuous shade
That lifts and swings a snaky head aloft
Surveying where to strike. . . .

Michael.

Away! Away!
Even now his pendulous neck doth sweep the Vale
From wall to wall, incredibly advanced
Leagues hither, though his lewder folds are still
Hid backward in the abyss. Away! Away!
From yonder peak we may behold all safe:
To linger here even spirits dare not.

Raphael.

Go;
I tarry. Let me take thy mighty sword.
A minstrel's hand can swing a blade at need.

Michael.

Not so. Forgive me this my violence!
Thy soul is all distraught and desperate,
And I must save thee in thine own despite.

(*He overpowers Raphael, and bears him aloft just as the enormous swinging head of the Serpent blots out the scene.*)

ACT V.

Time: as in Act IV.

ACT V. SCENE I.

An exposed upland: one side looks down into the Valley of the Judgment, on the others the snow-peaks fade into the visionary cliffs and slopes crowned by the battlements of Heaven. Sunset glow still lingers on the heights: the moon is rising.

Raphael (awaking).

Where are we, brother? I remember naught.

Michael.

Safe lifted o'er the Vale, and none too soon.

Raphael.

Help me to rise.

Michael.

Nay, rest thee yet a while.

Raphael.

Something of portent passes in the Vale —
I cannot well recall, but know 'tis so
By thy wild looking. Can thy vision pierce
So downward through the mists? Mine eyes are weak
And blink at the mild moon.

Michael.

Spare thou to look.
Even me it grieveth, thee it will destroy
With present heart-break.

Raphael.

O remembrance now
Creeps moaning through the sea-halls of my mind,—
A sluggish neap, with loss and wreckage strewn!

Michael.

The Serpent enters now that last defile
High lifted toward the spiritual hills.
Behind him as he came has silence fallen
And gesture ceased: final ineloquence.
These hither people are the lesser thewed
But more inspirited, who held the fight
Vanward against us, and who fell the first
Before the whirlwind of our going down.

Raphael.

Is it too late to save this remnant few
For seed of a new world, planted afar
Beyond this trouble? Come, thy might and mine!
He lifts a questioning head and seems to stand

Hesitant at the mouth of the defile :
There give him battle. . . .

Michael.

Nay.

Raphael.

Then I alone.

Michael.

Too late ; and even if sooner, much too late !
He brings the second death ; his fangs have power,
'Tis whispered, on the flaming seraphim
To tarnish or to quench ; one venom fleck
Flung from his jaws, how might it lame and scar
Our substance archangelical.

Raphael.

Yes, yes,
You give me reasons to it. Lovelier
Such scars upon the breast, though mortal proven,
Than that fair sigil set upon thy brow
The morn of thy first victory. Why live,
Why live, when all these wills that searched the earth —
Until they found their one and inward love,
Refusing to be still — have ceased to search,
Though quite unsatisfied ? To feel the night

Unvexed of longing, and the day purged blank
Of laughter and of sorrow and of brawl;
No pride of life to glory in the sun,
No ecstasy to mate the moon's increase,
No heart interpreting the twilight thrush —
All the heart's business done! Nay, not for me!
Mine ear hath lain too long on Nature's pulse,
I cannot miss that music. Let me go.

Michael (still detaining him).

Govern thy heart and tongue. Nature, thou knowest,
Was but a bye-thought of the Eternal Mind,
A whim — extravagant, repented of,
And now in its chief element of Man
Annihilate and put away, save those
Who rendered up their wills to His, and share
This night with Him the immortal quietudes.

Lo, where the Serpent enters! Quick and dead
Loosen their maimed embraces. From beneath
Heaves the incumbent carnage. In the clefts
And on the headlands scattered souls arise
Expectant or imploring . . . Now he reigns
Instant among them, and their sayings-nay
Decrease and come to nothing.

Raphael.

All is done:
The great refusal made. The wayward heats
That might have moved God's blood to sweetest ends
In dreams and deed, have bled themselves away,
And peace is his, though profitless.

Michael.

Hush! Look!
The Worm goes on!

Raphael.

What say'st thou? Speak!
Mine eyes are still too dim, I see not well
What passes 'neath the drifting fogs.

Michael.

He mounts!
He lays his length upward the visioned hills,
The inviolable fundaments of Heaven!
There where he climbs the kindled slopes grow pale,
Ashen the amethystine dells, and dim
The starry reaches. . . . Now he coils his bulk
About a foreland, and the nacrous light
It beetled with turns cinder. High he piles
His folds, and seems to note the upward way.
Hark, the trump sings to battle! I am called.

(*He flies upward toward the walls of Heaven.*)

Raphael (alone).

O darkest creature of God's shaping thought,
Shamefullest born, in that unsacred hour
When, pining for the pools of ancient sloth,
His soul repenteth Him that he had made
Man, and had put that passion out to use!
Cleavest thou inward now to find the heart
That bore thee shuddering and hath fostered thee
With secret sweat of agonizing brows?
Has this day's great defection armed thy fang
And lit thy wrath to seek Him where He sits
Sickening amid his harsh-established peace?

On which side then shall Raphael be found,—
The sociable spirit, very friend of man
And Nature's old-time lover? Surely there
At God's right hand, with a loud song for sword
To beat the Spectre back when armies fail,
And cheer Him as the shepherd Israel's king.

(*He flies after Michael.*)

ACT V. SCENE II.

Raphael stands on a promontory of the cloudy slope up which the Serpent has passed. The Valley of the Judgment lies far below.

Raphael.

A mortal weariness beats down my wing;
I cannot farther. Here I must remain,
Whether I will or no a truant still,
While battle rages round the heart of God,—
A recreant on the very slopes where first
With wistful feet from Heaven adventuring
I sought those little flowers of shyest light
Whose earthly hue and palpitance would speak
A wild distress of sweetness, till my blood
Sang wander-songs, and pictured to itself
The happy outland chances of the spring.
I think none grow now in the muted dells
Nor on the chidden reaches; yet — perhaps —
If I should search as earnestly as once. . . .

My mind strays like a fevered child's to-night
And plays with leaves and straws, regarding not
How fate comes on next instant! . . . Not alone,
Not all companionless must I abide
Its coming, love be praised who sends me love

And comradeship now at my dearest need!
For hither through the wintry windelstrae
Flee, veer, and flee a fluttered company
With hands outstretched and groping. Woman-
kind,
By the lorn influence that companions them
And hangs grief in the wind. . . . A taper's
flame
Streams backward o'er each trembling hand.
'Twill be
The seven dear sister spirits ancillary
Who tend their lamps of laud before the Throne.

Stay, sisters, stay! They swerve aside and flee
More terror-stricken still. I prithee stay;
'Tis Raphael calls!

First Lamp.

O then art thou too fled?
Haste, let us flee together! We had thought
All but the timid spirits still abode
The battle's outcome. Timid thou art not,
Though woman-gentle; is the battle lost?
Or won? Oh, surely won, since thou art here.

Raphael.

I come from earthward. Mortal weariness

Beat down my wing, and I was forced to stay.
How goes the struggle?

First Lamp.

In and in it stormed
From ring to lessening ring, until we fled,
I and the sister Lamps, save only one,
Our meekest and most patient flame of praise,
Whom naught could make afraid. Now by the wind
Distract, we wander on these withered hills.

Second Lamp.

How withered from the day thou brought'st us hence
Flowers for our lampads! — tiny troublous things
That living pierced us with a faint unrest
And dying left a nameless woe behind.

Raphael.

Call up each sweetness over-lived, for soon
Sweet shall be sweet no more, nor sad be sad.
Momently yonder Heaven's heart of light
Throbs feebler, and the dark gains on the day.

Now where he runs afar, the sun hath felt
Sharp pangs delay his feet, for swiftly hither

In the distressful beaming of the moon
Comes on the wasted light of Uriel.

Uriel (approaching).

The dream is done! Petal by petal falls
The coronal of creatured bloom God wove
To deck his brows at dawn.

Raphael.

No hope remains?

Uriel.

To save Him from himself not cherubim
Nor seraphim avail. Who loves not life
Receiveth not life's gifts at any hand.

Raphael.

And life He loved not, though it sprang from Him?

Uriel.

He loved it not entirely, good and ill.

Raphael.

For what end should we love an evil thing?

Uriel.

Better than I thou knowest, truant soul!
Who all the summer hours didst love to stoop
O'er insect feuds, herb-whisperings, and watch

The prurient-fingered sap startle the trees
To sudden laughter of bloom. Better than I
Thou knowest what lewd rebellion stings the core
Of nature, bidding every seed awake
To sacramental life after its kind;
Better than I thou knowest what cruelties
Rage round about each starry heroism,
Out of what murky stuff the lover builds
His soul's white habitation. 'Tis not mine
To lesson thee how height and depth are bound
So straitly that when evil dies, as soon
Good languishes, nor how the flesh and soul
Quicken with striving, and when strife is done
Decline from what they were.

Raphael.

Would He had dared
To nerve each member of his mighty frame —
Man, beast, and tree, and all the shapes of will
That dream their darling ends in clod and star —
To everlasting conflict, wringing peace
From struggle, and from struggle peace again,
Higher and sweeter and more passionate
With every danger passed! Would He had spared
That dark Antagonist whose enmity
Gave Him rejoicing sinews, for of Him

His foe was flesh of flesh and bone of bone,
With suicidal hand He smote him down,
And now indeed His lethal pangs begin.

First Lamp (to Uriel).

Brother, what lies beyond this trouble? Death?

Uriel.

All live in Him, with Him shall all things die.

Second Lamp.

And the snake reign, coiled on the holy hill?

Uriel.

Sorrow dies with the heart it feeds upon.

Raphael.

Look, where the red volcano of the fight
Hath burst, and down the violated hills
Pours ruin and repulse, a thousand streams
Choked with the pomp and furniture of Heaven.
In vain the Lion ramps against the tide,
In vain from slope to slope the giant Wraths
Rally but to be broken. Dwindling dim
Across the blackened pampas of the wind
The routed Horses flee with hoof and wing,
Till their trine light is one, and now is quenched.

Uriel.

The spirits fugitive from Heaven's brink
Put off their substance of ethereal fire
And mourn phantasmal on the phantom alps.

Fourth Lamp.

Mourn, sisters! For our light is fading too.
Thou of the topaz heart, thou of the jade,
And thou sweet trembling opal — ye are grown
Grey things, and aged as God's sorrowing eyes.

First Lamp.

My wick burns blue and dim.

Second Lamp.

My oil is spent.

Raphael.

The moon smoulders; and naked from their seats
The stars arise with lifted hands, and wait.

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